1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

in Magumeri died in the morning and was buried in the afternoon. The people explained this by saying that it was the hot season and he had died early in the morning. To wait until the next morning, they said, was too long and not good for the community. This was an oblique way of referring to the belief that the ghost of a dead man is dangerous especially to children until he is buried.

The ceremony itself is quite simple. The body is washed, wrapped in a white cloth and placed on a bier, and then taken out to the burial grounds by the men. Prayers are said continually and the family mourns officially for forty days by saying special prayers and remaining close to home. During the ceremony men remain impassive, quietly telling their beads and praying softly to themselves. Women, on the other hand, come in groups walking slowly in single file wailing and crying, especially if the deceased is a close neighbor, friend, or relative. If a man is needed for a short communication, a woman might stop wailing suddenly, talk in an ordinary voice, then just as quickly resume her keening. A few women at every funeral were observed who were much more totally involved and did not break up their wailing when asked to do something else. Sometimes these wails of the women become songs with words. This is less true at funerals of men where if it happens the song or chant says over and over again, "He was a good man." For a dead woman the words are also, "She was a good woman," but an added verse, especially if the dead woman was not very old, refers to the hard life of a woman and how long and unending are her chores. There is a definite implication here that the heavy burdens of womanhood can bring an early death.

This, then is the Kanuri life cycle; it is adapted to Bornu society and the historical development of that society. The fact that the household is the major unit of social organization means that people of different ages are constantly in touch with one another. Even though those in all age groups have many friends of their own age, they associate freely and easily with people of all age groups within their household where membership crosses generation lines. This means that younger age groupings are constantly learning the ways of behaving and thinking of those older than themselves and almost automatically know how to act as they grow up. By contrast in many western societies interaction between generations is extremely difficult, and each generation seems to be developing an almost semi-separate culture whose intricacies must be learned after one has joined that particular age group. Because western schooling has not yet separated an entire generation from their parents, there is little room among the Kanuri for many discontinuities in learning, and therefore in hopes, fears, and aspirations on the part of each successive generation. Obviously this has produced and helps to maintain much of the stability in Kanuri society, and as such it is a key factor when we wish to ask questions about conditions of change in the entire society of Bornu.